

“Ronald Reagan will be remembered as a great man and a great American leader who personified and advanced the highest ideals of the American people at home and abroad.

“After eight years of his presidency, the communism of Soviet Russia was collapsing, the American military was rebuilt, the nation's economy restored and it's moral fabric renewed. As he said himself, President Reagan left America ‘more prosperous, more secure, and happier than it was eight years earlier.’

“Many will remember him as the ‘Great Communicator.’

“But as the President said many times, he wasn't a great communicator, he communicated great things. Those were the traditional American values of this Midwesterner turned national leader. They came from the profound Christian faith inculcated into a young Dutch Reagan by his beloved mother Nelle and from his heart. And, as the President said, ‘they came from the heart of a great nation.’

“Those ideas were simple, straightforward and distinctly American. President Reagan believed that freedom depended on limited government. He fiercely advanced the principles of less government, less taxes, a strong military and a commitment to traditional moral values.

“And President Reagan changed the course of my life. While youthful ambition led me to politics, it was the voice and values of Ronald Reagan that made me a Republican. The Bible says, ‘If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?’

“Ronald Reagan's gift was to sound a clear call to return our nation to the ideals of its founders. It was said that when the average American heard Reagan speak of those values, they didn't just agree. From coffee shops to tractor seats to carpeted offices, when most Americans heard Reagan speak, they said, ‘darn right!’

“I met President Reagan in the summer of 1988.

“I was a 29 year-old candidate for Congress and he was winding down a presidency that changed the world.

“It was a Candidate photo op in the Blue Room of the White House. I was determined to say something of meaning to the great man.

“So I looked him square in the eye, and I told him I just wanted to ‘thank him for everything he had done for the country and everything he had done to inspire my generation to believe in America again.’

“He seemed surprised, his cheeks appeared to redden with embarrassment and he said, ‘Well, Mike, that's a very nice thing of you to say.’

“Moments later in the Ballroom he took a minute to respond to my and others' accolades with characteristic humility and optimism saying, ‘Many of you have thanked me for what I did for

America, but I want you to know I don't think I did anything for this country - the American people decided it was time to right the ship, and I was just the captain they put on the bridge when they did it.'

"In the midst of his extraordinary gifts, Ronald Reagan was a deeply humble man who believed in God and the American people with an unshakable faith.

"In his Farewell Address to the nation, President Reagan spoke poignantly of the distance that high office can place between the servant and the served.

"He said, 'One of the things about the presidency is that you're always somewhat apart. You spend a lot of time going by too fast in a car someone else is driving, and seeing the people through tinted glass - the parents holding up a child, and the wave you saw too late and couldn't return. And so many times I wanted to stop and reach out from behind the glass, and connect.'

"Well, permit me to say with affection – you did, Mr. President. And the free world, America and my small life are better for it.

"And so, good-bye Mr. President. God bless you, as, through you, God blessed the United States of America."

- Rep. Mike Pence